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ABSTRACT

A case study examined the nature of parent involvement in five Mexican-origin, migrant families with children who were highly successful students. The families had their home base in different regions of Texas. Each had a child recognized as an exemplary migrant high school graduate, and together the families had more than 40 academically successful children. More than 100 hours of telephone interviews and home visits generated common themes concerning what these parents believed and did about child rearing and education. Parents envisioned superior achievement for their children and believed that: parents were the first teachers; graduating from high school and college was not negotiable; education was more important than student work or extracurricular activities; working hard was critical; children must be respectful; and corporal punishment was ineffective and unnecessary. The parents were proud of their children and encouraged self-esteem. Three families mentioned strong religious beliefs. The parents made sure that the oldest children were high achievers, who could mentor their younger siblings. Parents attended all school activities with an academic focus and all ceremonies recognizing their children's achievement, ensured that a parent was at home after school, monitored children's free-time activities very closely, designated the more-educated parent to assume primary responsibility for education, encouraged conversation and critical-thinking skills, provided whatever academic help and learning materials they could give, advocated for their children at school, minimized school interruptions, and made use of community and school resources. (SV)

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CHAPTER 11

# Against All Odds: Lessons from Parents of Migrant High-Achievers

BY ROBERTO E. TREVIÑO

What if you met a low-income, migrant, non-English-speaking, undocumented family in which the parents had little or no formal education? What would you say the odds would be that one of their children would become an aerospace engineer for NASA? What would be the odds that one of their children would get a scholarship to Rice University or Harvard? What if this family had 18 children, and all 18 graduated from high school and went to college? What if you found *five* families like that? Would you want to find out what these parents did? That's what this chapter is about—a case study involving five very remarkable migrant families. Against all odds, they reared 41 highly successful children, among them doctors, nurses, lawyers, aerospace engineers, teachers, scientists, and business entrepreneurs. Best of all, you will learn what they did to help their children, and how they did it.

The first section describes what some authors (certainly not this one) might consider a *problem*. According to a number of scholars, migrant students are supposed to drop out of school and continue in the "culture of migrancy"—the *problem* is these five migrant families



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refute those studies.[1] The chapter continues with an explanation of how the study was conducted, including profiles of the initial sample of students. The second section describes how and why these parents involved themselves in their children's schooling. Finally, the chapter concludes with some ideas on what educators can do to involve migrant parents more effectively in the educational process.

## The *Problem* of Migrant High Achievers

Nationally, legislation and programs designed specifically to improve migrant student achievement have still not solved the problems associated with mobility, a major frustration for policymakers and migrant advocates.[2] In Texas, where this study was conducted, one in five migrant students is overage for grade; and of those migrants who persist through their senior year, nearly one in four will not graduate. During the 1997-98 school year, nearly six in ten migrant students in grades 10-12 did not pass all three sections (reading, writing, and mathematics) of the statewide exit-level examination, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).[3]

Nonetheless, each year the Texas Migrant Interstate Program (TMIP) recognizes exemplary migrant student graduates, such as valedictorians, salutatorians, student council presidents, and all-state athletes. Annually, these students have received academic scholarships and appointments to such institutions as Harvard, Rice, Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, West Point, and the Air Force Academy. In the TMIP awards ceremonies, students have attributed

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[1]The "culture of migrancy" was coined by Joseph O. Prewitt-Díaz, Robert T. Trotter, II, and Vidal A. Rivera, Jr., *Effects of Migration on Children: An Ethnographic Study* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Migrant Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 327 346). The concept will be discussed in the conclusions of this chapter.

[2]Ibid.; Harriett D. Romo, "The Newest 'Outsiders': Educating Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Youth," in *Children of La Frontera: Binational Efforts to Serve Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students*, ed. Judith LeBlanc Flores (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1996) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 635), 61-91; David B. Schuler, "Effects of Family Mobility on Student Achievement," *ERS Spectrum* 8, no. 4 (fall 1990): 17-24; and Andrew Trotter, "Harvest of Dreams," *American School Board Journal* 179, no. 8 (August 1992): 14-19.

[3]Texas Education Agency, *1998-99 State Performance Report: Title I, Part C, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, State Agency Program for Migrant Children* (Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1999).



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their success to a variety of factors, including a strong work ethic and mental toughness developed by persevering through many kinds of hardships, a first-hand experience of what life can be like without an education, and, most important, the support and influence of their families, particularly their parents.[4]

## Migrant Parents

Researchers have approached their investigations of migrant student success mostly from two perspectives: (1) the effect of the schools and their support systems and (2) the effect of the socio-cultural factors surrounding the migrant lifestyle.[5] Research addressing the involvement behaviors of migrant parents with their children has

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[4]Texas Migrant Interstate Program, *Exemplary Migrant Students of Texas* (Pharr, TX: Texas Migrant Interstate Program, 1998).

[5]Studies from the first perspective include Ann Cranston-Gingras and Donna J. Anderson, "Reducing the Migrant Student Dropout Rate: The Role of School Counselors," *School Counselor* 38, no. 2 (November 1990): 95-104; Mary Henning-Stout, "¿Qué podemos hacer?: Roles for School Psychologists with Mexican and Latino Migrant Children and Families," *School Psychology Review* 25, no. 2 (1996): 152-64; David Hinojosa and Louie Miller, "Grade Level Attainment among Migrant Farm Workers in South Texas." *Journal of Educational Research* 77, no. 6 (July-August 1984): 346-50; Prewitt-Díaz, "The Factors That Affect the Educational Performance of Migrant Children," *Education* 111, no. 4 (1991): 483-86; Pedro Reyes, Jay D. Scribner and Alicia Paredes Scribner, eds., *Creating Learning Communities: Lessons from High Performing Hispanic Schools*. Critical Issues in Educational Leadership Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); Romo, "Newest 'Outsiders'"; and Anne Salerno, *Migrant Students Who Leave School Early: Strategies for Retrieval* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 179).

Studies from the second perspective include José A. Cárdenas, *Education and the Children of Migrant Farmworkers: An Overview* (Cambridge: Center for Law and Education, Harvard University, 1976) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 134 367); E. Garza, Jr., "Life Histories of Academically Successful Migrant Students" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas, 1998); Guy J. Manaster, J. C. Chan, and R. Safady, "Mexican-American Migrant Students' Academic Success: Sociological and Psychological Acculturation," *Adolescence* 27, no. 105 (spring 1992): 123-36; Prewitt-Díaz, Trotter, and Rivera, *Effects of Migration on Children*; Linda Rasmussen, *Migrant Students at the Secondary Level: Issues and Opportunities for Change* (ERIC Digest) (Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1988) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 296 814); Schuler, "Effects of Family Mobility"; and Al Wright, *Reauthorized Migrant Education Program: Old Themes and New* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1995 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 380 267).



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been quite limited.[6] Many policy decisions made in the design and implementation of parent involvement programs for migrant families are based mainly on the parent involvement literature for either traditional student populations or nonmigrant Mexican American populations. Considering that migrant students often attend many schools in many different communities, it would seem logical to study these highly mobile children from the standpoint of the one constant in their lives—their *families*.

Could it be that migrant parents, being a nontraditional population, might involve themselves in their children's education in nontraditional ways? Moreover, based on the assumption that parent involvement has a positive influence on student achievement, would it not make sense to examine how the parents of high-achieving migrant students involve themselves in their children's education? Thus, the principal research question of this study was: *Why and how do parents of high-achieving migrant students get involved in their children's education?*

## Methodology

The subjects of the study were five Texas-home-based Mexican-origin migrant parents—mothers and/or fathers—from five very different geographic regions of Texas: (1) Pharr, in the Rio Grande Valley; (2) Hereford, in the Texas Panhandle; (3) Baytown, 30 miles outside Houston; (4) Loraine, a small town of 731 people in west Texas; and (5) San Antonio, a city of 1.1 million with a Hispanic population of more than a half million. These locations were selected to determine whether the parents involved themselves differently in schools and communities where the Mexican-origin population was

[6]Stephanie L. Bressler, "Voices of Latina Migrant Mothers in Rural Pennsylvania," in *Children of La Frontera* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 647), 311-24; Nancy Feyl Chavkin, *Family Lives and Parental Involvement in Migrant Students' Education* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 174); Chavkin, "Involving Migrant Families in Their Children's Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Schools," in *Children of La Frontera* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 648, 325-39; Mary Lou de Leon Siantz, "Maternal Acceptance/Rejection of Mexican Migrant Mothers," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (June 1990): 245-54; and Siantz and M. Shelton Smith, "Parental Factors Correlated with Developmental Outcome in the Migrant Head Start Child," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 9, no. 3-4 (1994): 481-503.



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the majority as opposed to those places where they were the distinct minority.

Although all students in the initial sample were male, their role was merely to identify their parents. During the interviews, the parents described their involvement behaviors relative to *all* their children—male and female. The findings described later do not make distinctions as to gender, but clearly this is an area for further research, relative to both parent involvement and student achievement.

Three types of data were used: (1) semistructured individual interviews employing a protocol of open-ended questions and probes, (2) field observations, and (3) field notes. Data were gathered in the fall of 1999 from more than 100 hours of personal audiotaped interviews, telephone interviews, and home visits. Participants could express themselves in either English or Spanish, and all customs of *respeto, cortesía,* and *hospitalidad* that are common to Mexican-origin families were observed. At the families' request, all interviews were conducted in Spanish.

## Student Profiles[7]

**Abel Juárez.** Abel has one older brother and two younger sisters. Both his parents are natives of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas and immigrated to the United States illegally. They settled in Baytown, a coastal city of approximately 70,000, located 30 miles east of downtown Houston. Baytown is served by Goose Creek Independent School District, which has an enrollment of approximately 18,000 students, of whom 37 percent are Hispanic, 17 percent are Black, and 45 percent are White. Abel graduated from high school in three years and then graduated from Rice University in Houston in three years, majoring in mechanical engineering.[8]

**Carlos Ojeda.** Carlos graduated as salutatorian of his class of nearly 500 seniors, finishing with a 99.5 GPA in the Advanced Honors Program. He has five older sisters and one younger sister. His father,

[7]The names of all students and family members have been changed to protect their privacy.

[8]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1990,* Current Population Reports Series P-20, no. 449 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991); and Texas Education Agency, *District Snapshot Report: 1997-98* (Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1998).

a native of Nuevo León, and his mother, from San Luis Potosí, immigrated to the United States illegally and settled in Hidalgo County in the Rio Grande Valley. Hidalgo County has a population of more than 380,000, of which more than 315,000 are of Mexican origin. Carlos's school district has an enrollment of more than 20,000 students, of whom 98 percent are Hispanic. Carlos currently majors in engineering at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg.[9]

**Antonio Ortega.** Antonio graduated as valedictorian of his class, finishing with a 108.9 GPA in the Advanced Honors Program. He has one older brother and a younger sister. His mother, the only single parent in the sample, is a native of Chihuahua and immigrated to the United States illegally in the mid-1970s. After migrating to Kansas, Carlos's family settled in Hereford in the Texas Panhandle. Hereford Independent School District has an enrollment of approximately 4,400 students, of whom 73 percent are Hispanic and 25 percent are White. Antonio, a National Merit Scholar, currently attends Harvard University, majoring in engineering.[10]

**Martín Cantú.** Martín graduated fourth in his class of more than 300 seniors, with a GPA of 100.2. He is the second youngest of 11 children, having six brothers and four sisters. His parents, both natives of Zacatecas, immigrated to the United States illegally and settled in San Antonio. The San Antonio Independent School District is one of the largest in Texas, with an enrollment of more than 61,000 students, of whom 84 percent are Hispanic. The enrollment at Martín's high school is more than 88 percent Hispanic, with 85 percent of the students listed as economically disadvantaged. Elected three times to *Who's Who Among American High School Students*, Martín majors in mechanical engineering at Texas A&M University in College Station.[11]

**Ricardo Castillo.** Ricardo graduated as president of his senior class and was an all-district athlete. He is the youngest of 18 children, all of whom have graduated from high school and attended college. Twelve have university degrees and four have community-college degrees. His parents, both first-generation *tejanos*, picked cotton with

[9]Texas Education Agency, *District Snapshot Report: 1997-98.*

[10]Ibid.

[11]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Hispanic Population*; and Ibid.

their families throughout southern and western Texas, finally settling in the small town of Loraine in Mitchell County. Sixty-seven percent of the residents in Mitchell County are White, and 28 percent are of Mexican origin. The school district is the smallest of the sample, having an enrollment of 199, of whom 59 percent are Hispanic and 35 percent are White. More than 75 percent of the students in Loraine Independent School District are listed as economically disadvantaged. Ricardo recently became the 13th college graduate in the family, graduating from Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas.[12]

## Findings

The findings were generated by an initial list of 18 open-ended questions aimed at permitting the parents to provide as much information as possible. The data from the audiotapes were then transcribed, translated, and analyzed for common themes that emerged among the five families. To minimize researcher bias, each family was given the opportunity to review the findings and conclusions for accuracy and correctness, and changes were made accordingly. Not surprisingly, when asked *why* they involved themselves in certain activities, the parents explained it had to do with their personal and family belief systems.

### What These Migrant Parents Believe

**It all starts with a vision.** In each case, at least one parent, with strong support from the other, envisioned superior achievement for their children. The parents had remarkably high academic expectations as well as performance standards. They expected *all* their children to choose a profession and be successful at it.

**Parents are the first teachers.** The parents considered themselves partners with teachers in their children's education. They saw themselves as their children's first teachers and recognized a responsibility to provide as much academic support as possible when the children were out of school.

**Graduating from high school and college is not negotiable.** The families expected *all* their children—girls and boys—to graduate,

[12]Texas Education Agency, *District Snapshot Report: 1997-98.*

preferably with honors. Getting a college degree was not part of the original vision, but the parents expanded their expectations when educators informed them that their children had the achievement profiles to succeed in college. As the older children began college, the goals for the younger children changed from just graduating from high school to graduating from college and obtaining a professional degree.

**Keep the main thing the main thing.** In word and action, the parents in this study made it clear that education was *the* top priority for the whole family. Farm work or any other type of work was secondary for the children and did not interfere with school. In one instance, parents gave each of their 18 children $300 in seed money to take to college—a considerable commitment given their limited resources. Another father won encyclopedias for his children by selling the books door to door. He succeeded at the sales job despite working a full day at a slaughterhouse and not speaking English.

These families did not expect their children to waste time in school but to focus on the lessons and be academically engaged. Except for music, the parents considered school organizations, sports, and other extracurricular activities secondary to academic achievement. Such activities were allowed as long as the children maintained high grades. The parents' motto was "no 'A,' no play."

The parents budgeted their limited money to provide adequate food, medical attention, clothing, books, reference materials, computers, and school supplies for their children. With little or no money for luxuries, the children had fewer distractions such as video games, cars, and music entertainment systems. The children's lives revolved around school, chores, homework, church, and family fellowship.

**No one's going to give you anything on a silver platter.** In their own words, the parents were self-sufficient, proactive *luchistas* (strivers) and expected their children to be the same. They did not expect anything to be given to them on a *platón de plata* (silver platter). On the contrary, these families were very sensitive to the stereotypes attached to illegal immigrants, such as sponging off the government. They took pride in not soliciting help from health and social services. Moreover, with encouragement from their parents, the children developed a mind-set that they were just as bright as their mainstream classmates and could outwork and outthink their way to success in this country.

**Respeto.** Similar to the findings of Guadalupe Valdés, the study found that the families expected their children to respect themselves, teachers, and other students.[13] The children understood that teachers and school administrators were to be considered *segundos padres* (second parents). The parents expected their children to be respectful and cooperative but also competitive high achievers.

**Be proud of who you are.** The parents took pride in all their children's accomplishments and pointed out the assets that had helped them achieve so well: individual gifts, older siblings who were there to help, the superiority of being bilingual and bicultural, and the mental and physical toughness developed from persevering through various family hardships and struggles.

**Religious faith.**[14] Adhering to strong religious beliefs, three of the five families professed to be devout, practicing Christians and followed a strict moral code. These three families gave much credit to their faith in God for helping them overcome numerous hardships.

**You don't need to spank your children.** The parents did not consider corporal punishment an effective form of discipline. They expected their children to be self-disciplined and very conscious that all behavior, good or bad, reflects on the entire family. The families used extra chores, work details, and revocation of school privileges as forms of discipline.

## What These Migrant Parents Did

**Made sure the oldest children were high achievers.** The parents spent more time working with the oldest children for two reasons: (1) older children were more academically challenged because of limited English proficiency, and (2) given the parents' limited educational levels, it was easier to help the older children in the lower grades.

**Involved themselves in school activities with an academic focus.** The parents never missed one-to-one parent-teacher or parent-counselor conferences regarding their children's academic progress. If

[13]Guadalupe Valdés, *Con Respeto—Bridging the Distances Between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools: An Ethnographic Portrait* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[14]Note: This topic was not solicited by the researcher.

the teacher did not speak Spanish, they asked the school for an interpreter or, more commonly, asked an older child to translate. None of the parents participated in Migrant Parent Advisory Councils or Site-Based Decision-Making Committees; however, they did occasionally attend PTA or large campus meetings. They rarely attended campus-wide meetings, most of which were conducted in English only, making it impossible to understand what was being discussed. On the other hand, they attended much more regularly when schools conducted the meetings bilingually or provided translators during meetings.

**Attended all ceremonies in which their children were being recognized.** They attended no matter how small the recognition and no matter how difficult it was for them to attend. Even when the recognition meetings were conducted totally in English, the parents realized their presence was extremely important and meaningful to their children.

**Ensured that at least one parent attended to the children after school.** Even if it meant sacrificing much-needed income, they took jobs that allowed the flexibility to be home for their children after school. The single mother, for example, chose to work as a house maid, despite better job opportunities, because the house maid job allowed her to finish work in time to be home when her children got out of school. In other families, the fathers worked two or three jobs to allow the mothers to address school matters that might arise during the day and to be there when the children got home from school.

**Monitored free-time activity very closely.** They allowed little or no time for TV, video games, or "hanging out" with friends. Often, the lack of financial resources did not allow the children these luxuries. The parents saw this as an advantage rather than a deficit because it allowed the children to stay focused on studying. Indeed, they took great care to ensure their children's friends were also academically focused and encouraged them to form self-help study groups, especially in high school. Homework, chores, family time, and academic engagement activities were top priorities after school.

**Designated one parent to assume primary responsibility for school performance.** In three of the families, mothers were responsible for school-related issues and academic performance; in the other two, fathers were responsible. In all cases, the primary parent was the

one with the highest educational level, with the second parent acting as an alternate and usually equally informed. This study suggests that educational level—not gender—is what matters to parents in deciding who assumes the responsibility for their children's school performance.

**Encouraged higher level thinking skills.** The parents conversed with their children as intellectual equals yet maintained the aspect of *respeto*. They discussed complex, sometimes sensitive, family problems and decisions using advanced language forms in Spanish. The parents devoted much time to reading, storytelling, and physical play, especially during preschool years, and made extensive use of oral language, vocabulary, fantasy, and critical-thinking skills during bedtime stories in Spanish.

**Provided whatever academic help they were able to give.** Despite their educational levels, the parents tried their best to help with spelling, reading, science, and math, mostly in Spanish. In the process, they learned English from their children.

**Provided the most effective learning materials they could afford.** These included library books, children's Bible books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and, in two cases, personal computers. The parents used their limited resources to buy their children the necessary educational resources, shopping at garage sales, flea markets, and thrift stores. They also visited local municipal libraries almost weekly, making sure the children had plenty of reading materials at home.

**Advocated firmly for their children at school.** Willing to endure possible embarrassment because of their limited English skills, modest dress, or unfamiliarity with school protocol, the parents were not intimidated by school staff and other authorities. They gave all due respect to teachers and administrators and accepted nothing less in return. They nipped small problems in the bud, making sure their children received the same fair treatment as other students, especially regarding academic opportunities.

**Minimized school interruptions.** At all grades, but especially at the secondary level, the parents made remarkable personal sacrifices to ensure their children did not miss school. One family flew a son down from Indiana so he could be home on the first day of school. Another father interrupted his work in the fields in Washington state to drive his

Mexican-born, high school-age daughters to San Luis Potosí and Monterrey so they would not miss school. He dropped off his daughters and immediately returned to Washington to finish the harvest.

**Permitted children to participate in musical activities.** The parents favored musical activities such as band, orchestra, and *mariachi* above sports, clubs, and student government. Hard contact sports were least favored because of potential injuries and their possible financial impact on the family. To keep their children focused, participation in musical or any other activities always depended on academic performance.

**Deliberately developed the older children as mentors and tutors.** The parents realized that the older siblings comprised the academic learning capital of the family and delegated certain *in loco parentis* responsibilities to them. As the older children became academically successful, they helped the younger children with homework and advised them on courses to take in high school, college admissions, and financial aid.

**Made extensive use of learning resources in the community.** The families visited their local libraries regularly and often, especially during the summer months. Each child checked out books to read at home. Library fines were no deterrent. The parents chauffeured children to school functions, study-group meetings, and school laboratories to complete projects, even late in the evenings and on weekends. As long as it had to do with school, the parents responded quickly, willingly, and with a positive attitude.

**Valued counselors and teachers as critical resources.** The Rice and Harvard students would not have received scholarships without considerable help from their counselors. Educators also were responsible for expanding the parents' vision to include getting a college degree. Unfortunately, some school counselors did not inform the parents about residency and citizenship requirements for college admission and financial aid. As a result, some of the older children—despite equally high achievement—did not have the same college opportunities as their younger siblings.

## Conclusions

As mentioned, most of the literature on migrant students would suggest that the term *high-achieving migrant student* is an oxymoron. The fact is that, compared to other student populations, little has been

written about migrant students, particularly the role of parents in their education. Unfortunately, what *has* been written has been based on disadvantaged, deficit, or at-risk theories of academic failure; that is, much ado has been made about the negative effects of Mexican-origin culture, the lack of adoption of *American* values, and the supposed lack of high aspirations.[15]

One study, for example, concluded that Mexican-born migrant students with Mexican-born parents tend to be low performers; attend smaller high schools in smaller towns; and come from families that are larger, poorer, more rural, and more "foreign."[16] Even Joseph Prewitt-Díaz and his colleagues, whose study is certainly the most frequently cited and perhaps the most comprehensive ethnographic study on the effects of migration on children, conclude by proposing the existence of "the culture of migrancy." The theory suggests migrant parents feel that the cycle of migration is too hard to break and that their children are likely to end up being migrants too.[17] In contrast, the present study demonstrates clearly that the "culture of migrancy" is not an absolute and can be changed, and supports the notion that parents of high-achieving migrant students involve themselves in their children's education in ways that sometimes differ from school expectations. It further suggests how educators can partner with migrant parents more effectively to enhance the academic achievement of migrant students.

## What Educators Can Do

View the children's migrant/immigrant experience as a positive attribute, not a deficit. In fact, the struggles and hardships of migrants give children strengths such as perseverance, focus, motivation, discipline, attention to detail, teamwork, resiliency, initiative, priority-setting skills, resourcefulness, and bilingual/bicultural abilities.

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[15]George O. Coalson, *The Development of the Migratory Farm Labor System in Texas: 1900-1954* (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates, 1977); Celia S. Heller, *Mexican American Youth: Forgotten Youth at the Crossroads* (New York: Random House, 1966); William Madsen, *Mexican-Americans of South Texas* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston, 1966); and Audrey James Schwartz, "A Comparative Study of Values and Achievement: Mexican-American and Anglo Youth," *Sociology of Education* 44, no. 4 (fall 1971): 438-62.

[16]Manaster, Chan, and Safady, "Mexican-American Migrant Students' Academic Success."

[17]Prewitt-Díaz, Trotter, and Rivera, *Effects of Migration on Children*, 117.

**Help migrant parents get involved in activities that meet their needs, not the school's.** If parents are interested primarily in the academic achievement of their children, one-to-one parent-teacher or parent-counselor meetings may be more important than joining the Migrant PAC or the PTA. Ask them to attend activities involving their children, especially awards recognitions. Sensitize school staff to understand that education is a very high priority for migrant parents; however, as a nontraditional parent subgroup, they may not readily participate in more traditional parent involvement activities like PTA or helping teachers in the classroom.

**Encourage parents to establish a tradition of academic excellence.** Urge parents to expend maximum attention and energy as early as possible to enable the oldest children to be high achievers. This will pay huge dividends when the older siblings mentor and tutor the younger ones.

**Help parents resolve their children's U.S. citizenship as soon as possible.** Parents should know that universities in the United States require incoming students to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents by at least their senior year in high school. Educators must explain to parents that, in most states, migrant students cannot receive scholarships and other types of federal financial aid unless they are legal residents, regardless of academic achievement. Because the legalization process is extremely complex and slow moving on both sides of the border, parents should know this information as early as grades 5-6. This can be accomplished without asking parents directly about their personal citizenship status. Moreover, school-community liaison staff can put parents in contact with agencies and individuals who can help negotiate the legal residency process.

**Empower migrant parents to be advocates for their children.** Help parents develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them communicate with teachers, counselors, and school administrators in *any* school, in any state, whether in Mexico or the United States. Migrant parents need to know what questions to ask, whom to ask, and who the power brokers and gatekeepers are. Train them on the various school programs available to meet the needs of their children as well as state graduation and promotion requirements. Migrant parents need to know their rights under the law, including the

protocol—how to get things done legally and effectively, with due respect and consideration among all concerned.

**Reach out to migrant families during evening hours and on weekends.** For equity reasons, schools located in economically depressed areas should offer extended-day and weekend programs that allow students to access print and multimedia libraries, science laboratories, and computer banks. Evenings and weekends can also be used for PTA meetings, one-to-one parent-teacher or parent-counselor conferences, legal residency counseling, English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes, and training for parents on home-teaching skills.

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